

Masthead Logo

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The Little Stones

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THE LITTLE STONES

The little stones line up on the road
and march off. Some are for windows,
some are for foreheads, some for the
slipping wheels of locomotives. As they
reach their stations they turn off
without saying goodbye to each other.
This one is lucky. He will be a jewel.
He will live on the breasts of beautiful
women and in the pockets of thieves.
Now this one stops. He is meant for the
hand of a child and the eye of the child's
sister. And here is a row of four. See
how they march together? These stones
will grow large, they will signal the
tombs of a family, one for the mother
and father, one for the daughter and two
for the son who dies in a strange land.
And a handful of six round, white stones
to rub against each other in the pocket
of a mathematician. These six stones
will conjure numbers that haven't been
invented yet, will measure galaxies, the
speed of solar systems, the deaths of stars.
And the stars, exploding, will become
stones and will line up again on a road
and march off, some for windows, some for
foreheads, some for the slipping wheels
of locomotives or the tombs of families
of four—the mother, father, daughter, the
son with his body in one land, his grave
in another, each of them marked by a stone.